

# Bahrain

*The Government of Bahrain has established a legal framework to protect children from many forms of hazardous child labor and child trafficking, but children continue to be trafficked into the country for domestic service and sexual exploitation. Domestic servants have minimal workplace protections under the Labor Law.*

## Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Percent
Working	Unavailable
Attending School	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	Unavailable



## Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Bahrain are exploited in the worst forms of child labor, particularly as the result of child trafficking.<sup>315</sup> Girls are reportedly recruited as domestic servants and are trafficked into the country with falsified documents concealing the minor's age.<sup>316</sup> There have been reports of minors being trafficked to Bahrain for domestic service or sexual exploitation, particularly from South and Southeast Asia.<sup>317</sup> Child domestic labor may involve long hours of work and may expose children to mental and physical abuse by their employer.<sup>318</sup>

## Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Law sets the minimum age for work at 14 and hazardous work at 16.<sup>319</sup> The Government is in the process of revising the Labor Law to increase the minimum age for hazardous work to 18.<sup>320</sup> Ministerial Order No. 6 outlines a list of 25 types of hazardous work universally proscribed.<sup>321</sup>

For all other work, minors between ages 14 and 16 seeking to provide financial assistance to their families must obtain authorization to work from the Ministry of Labor (MOL) and must file a medical examination prior to employment.<sup>322</sup> However, the Labor Law

(article 2) explicitly exempts domestic workers, including child domestics, from all provisions in the law, and no other labor laws protect child domestics.<sup>323</sup>

The 2008 Law to Combat Trafficking in Persons prohibits all forms of trafficking, including trafficking of children under age 18, for prostitution or any other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, and slavery.<sup>324</sup> The law provides harsher punishments for trafficking children who are under age 15.<sup>325</sup>

The minimum age for military service is 18.<sup>326</sup>

## Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

MOL inspectors enforce child labor laws.<sup>327</sup> Some inspectors from the Labor Market Regulatory Authority also perform inspections, particularly concerning foreigners' work permits and working situations.<sup>328</sup> There are 43 MOL labor inspectors who investigate for violations of labor law, including child labor.<sup>329</sup> Specific information on inspections, child labor violations, or penalties is not available. Although labor inspectors are empowered to investigate all places of work, reports indicate that workplaces outside of the industrial sector are less closely monitored.<sup>330</sup>

Labor inspectors are trained on child labor laws and regulations.<sup>331</sup> During the reporting period, MOL

also coordinated a workshop on child labor for judges, lawyers, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, NGOs, and employers.<sup>332</sup>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs heads a committee to set trafficking policy; the committee meets every other month.<sup>333</sup> The Ministry of Social Development leads a second committee to deal with trafficking victims.<sup>334</sup> This committee is charged with assessing the status of each victim and determining whether they should be allowed to remain in the country or whether they should be returned to their place of origin.<sup>335</sup>

The Ministry of the Interior's Criminal Investigation Directorate oversees a 10-person unit that works on human trafficking enforcement.<sup>336</sup> The Royal Police Academy trains recruits to identify trafficking victims and, in 2009, 29 law enforcement officers participated in a 3-day training workshop on human trafficking.<sup>337</sup> During the reporting period, the Government reported two prosecutions and one new investigation under the Law to Combat Trafficking in Persons.<sup>338</sup>

### **Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor**

The Government has stated that child labor is not a significant problem and, therefore, it has not allocated

resources to develop a national action plan to combat the worst forms of child labor or established a child labor task force.<sup>339</sup> While there is no evidence of child labor in most sectors, there have been several reports of children being trafficked into domestic service in Bahrain, and there is no policy or plan to address this issue.

### **Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor**

The Government participates in a USDOS-funded program to build capacity and raise awareness of anti-trafficking efforts.<sup>340</sup> This project includes awareness-raising workshops for government ministries, development of a database of trafficking in persons, and publication of a workers' rights pamphlet.<sup>341</sup>

The Government funds an NGO-run shelter, Dar Al Aman, which provides services for a small number of trafficking victims, including children.<sup>342</sup> The shelter provides legal, medical, and psychological services to female victims of family violence and human trafficking. Bahrain does not have any shelters for male trafficking victims or runaway workers.<sup>343</sup> Existing programs do not appear to specifically address children trafficked for domestic service and commercial sexual exploitation.

#### **Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the reduction of the worst forms of child labor in Bahrain:**

##### **IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:**

- Complete revisions to the Labor Law to increase the minimum age for hazardous work to 18.
- Amend the Labor Law to provide protections for children engaged in domestic service.

##### **IN THE AREA OF ENFORCEMENT:**

- Ensure monitoring for child labor in all workplaces, and track and publish data on inspections and violations.

##### **IN THE AREA OF POLICY:**

- Develop a national plan of action to address child trafficking for domestic service.

##### **IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS:**

- Revise current anti-trafficking programs to address the special needs of trafficked children, specifically for domestic service and commercial sexual exploitation.

<sup>315</sup> Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are not available from the data sources that are used by USDOL. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. For more information on sources used for these statistics, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the “Children’s Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section.

<sup>316</sup> Sigma Huda, *Expert on Trafficking in Persons Ends Visit to Bahrain*, Press Release, November 1, 2006; available from [www.unhcr.ch/hurricane/hurricane/nsf/view01/58FAF1D58BE8FAAFC1257219005C](http://www.unhcr.ch/hurricane/hurricane/nsf/view01/58FAF1D58BE8FAAFC1257219005C).

<sup>317</sup> Rasha Al Qahtani, “Police Break up Girl Trafficking Ring,” *Gulf Daily News* (Manama), July 29, 2010; available from <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=283318>. See also Geoffrey Bew, “Trafficking Horror Revealed,” *Gulf Daily News* (Manama), January 28, 2006. See also Huda, *Expert on Trafficking in Persons Ends Visit to Bahrain*, Press Release. See also UN News Centre, “Bahrain: UN human trafficking expert gives mixed report after fact-finding visit”, UN.org, [online], November 1, 2006 [cited July 29, 2010]; available from <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=20453&Cr=bahrain&Cr1>.

<sup>318</sup> Huda, *Expert on Trafficking in Persons Ends Visit to Bahrain*, Press Release.

<sup>319</sup> Government of Bahrain, *Labour Law for the Private Sector, as amended*, No. 23, (June 16, 1976); available from <http://www.mol.gov.bh/MOL/En/Legislations/ListArticles.aspx?ChnlNm=Chapter%20One&ChnlDspl=The+Labour+Law+for+the+Private+Sector&ChnlPrnt=Labour+Law&ChnlPDspl=Labour+Law>. See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request Concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182) Bahrain (ratification: 2001)*, [online] 2008 [cited January 22, 2009]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/pdconv.pl?host=status01&textbase=iloeng&document=21847&chapter=9&query=Bahrain%40ref&highlight=&querytype=bool&context=0>.

<sup>320</sup> ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request Concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Bahrain (ratification: 2001)*, [online] 2009 [cited April 2, 2010]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/pdconv.pl?host=status01&textbase=iloeng&document=23480&chapter=9&query=%28C182%29+%40ref+%2B+%28Bahrain%29+%40ref&highlight=&querytype=bool&context=0>.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.].

<sup>322</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Bahrain,” in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2009*, Washington, DC, March 11, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136066.htm>. See also Government of Bahrain, *Labour Law for the Private Sector*.

<sup>323</sup> Government of Bahrain, *Labour Law for the Private Sector*. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, March 3, 2010.

<sup>324</sup> ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request C182: Bahrain (2009)*. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, February 1, 2010. See also U.S. Department of State, “Bahrain,” in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142759.htm>. See also Government of Bahrain, *Fighting and Combating Trafficking in Persons Draft Law*, (2008).

<sup>325</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Bahrain.”

<sup>326</sup> U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, February 1, 2010.

<sup>327</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Bahrain.”

<sup>328</sup> U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, February 1, 2010.

<sup>329</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Bahrain.” See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, February 1, 2010.

<sup>330</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Bahrain.” See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request C182: Bahrain (2008)*.

<sup>331</sup> ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request C182: Bahrain (2009)*.

<sup>332</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Bahrain.”

<sup>333</sup> U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, February 1, 2010.

<sup>334</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Bahrain,” section 6.

<sup>335</sup> U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, February 1, 2010.

<sup>336</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Bahrain.”

<sup>337</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Bahrain,” in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010*, Washington, DC, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/index.htm>.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request C182: Bahrain (2008)*. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, February 1, 2010.

<sup>340</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Open Projects by Region and Country*, [online] May 14, 2010 [cited September 28, 2010]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/other/2010/143270.htm>.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.]. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, March 3, 2010.

<sup>342</sup> U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, March 3, 2010. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, November 14, 2010.

<sup>343</sup> U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting*, February 1, 2010.